

Message Text

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TO AMEMBASSY PARIS PRIORITY

S E C R E T STATE 027452

NODIS
CHEROKEE, FOR THE AMBASSADOR

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: US, FR

SUBJECT: LETTER TO GISCARD D'ESTAING

FOLLOWING FYI IS TEXT OF LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT TO
GISCARD D'ESTAING, DATED JANUARY 27, THE ORIGINAL OF WHICH
HAS BEEN DELIVERED TO THE FRENCH.

BEGIN TEXT: "DEAR VALERY: AS YOU KNOW FROM OUR DISCUSSION
IN PARIS, I SHARE YOUR INCREASING CONCERN ABOUT DEVELOP-
MENTS IN THE HORN OF AFRICA. THE GROWING MILITARY ROLE OF
THE SOVIETS AND CUBANS IS TRANSFORMING A LOCAL CONFLICT
INTO ONE WITH MUCH GRAVER IMPLICATIONS. WE ARE HOPING TO
DEVELOP AN APPROACH IN THE HORN THAT WILL REDUCE SOVIET
AND CUBAN INVOLVEMENT AND PRESERVE THE TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY
AND INDEPENDENCE OF BOTH ETHIOPIA AND SOMALIA,

I VALUE THE INFORMATION YOU SENT ME, THROUGH JEAN FRANCOIS-
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PONCET, ON SOVIET AIRCRAFT MOVEMENTS THROUGH ADEN. OUR
MOST RECENT INFORMATION INDICATES THAT THERE ARE APPROXI-
MATELY 1500 CUBAN COMBAT TROOPS IN ETHIOPIA WITH AN ADDI-
TIONAL 2000 TO 3000 MORE SCHEDULED TO ARRIVE WITHIN THE
NEXT FEW WEEKS. PLANNING IS WELL ADVANCED TO COMMIT THEM
IN THE NORTHERN OGADEN. THEY WILL APPARENTLY BE DEPLOYED
AS A MECHANIZED BRIGADE AND AN ARTILLERY BATTALION, WHILE

CUBAN PILOTS ARE SLATED TO BECOME ACTIVE IN THE FIGHTING, TOO. WE HAVE ALSO LEARNED THAT ADDITIONAL SHIPMENTS OF MIG-21'S AND MIG-17'S HAVE ARRIVED IN ETHIOPIA RECENTLY FROM THE SOVIET UNION. A NUMBER OF IL-28'S ARE SAID TO BE EN ROUTE AND THESE, ACCORDING TO WHAT WE HEAR, ARE GOING TO BE PILOTED ENTIRELY BY CUBANS. THE CUBAN ROLE IS THUS RAPIDLY SHIFTING FROM AN ADVISORY ONE TO ONE OF SIGNIFICANT INVOLVEMENT IN THE FIGHTING ITSELF.

AS WE SAID IN PARIS, IT IS IMPORTANT FOR THE SOVIET UNION TO UNDERSTAND THE GRAVITY OF THE ACTIONS IT IS TAKING IN ETHIOPIA. I AM PARTICULARLY CONCERNED THAT DEEPENING SOVIET AND CUBAN INVOLVEMENT WILL COMPLICATE THE PURSUIT OF MUTUAL INTERESTS IN OTHER AREAS, INCLUDING THE GENERAL DEVELOPMENT OF DETENTE, AND THE CONCLUSION AND RATIFICATION OF A SALT AGREEMENT -- BECAUSE OF DOMESTIC REACTION HERE IN AMERICA.

THE SOVIETS ARE NOT ENCOURAGING SETTLEMENT OF UNDERLYING ISSUES, BUT INSTEAD ARE EXACERBATING THEM. BEING SURE OF SOVIET MILITARY SUPPORT, MENGISTU FEELS FREE TO COMMIT GREATER VIOLENCE AGAINST HIS OWN PEOPLE. IN ERITREA, SOVIET SUPPORT WILL PERMIT MENGISTU TO STEP UP THE FIGHTING WITH THE REBELS, CAUSING MORE HARDSHIP FOR THE LOCAL POPULATION. THE ADDITION OF CUBAN TROOPS IN A COMBAT
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ROLE, IN CLOSE COLLABORATION WITH THE SOVIETS, RAISES THE CLEAR POSSIBILITY OF THEIR GOING ON TO PLAY THE SAME ROLE AS THEY HAVE IN ANGOLA: MAINTAINING IN POWER A REGIME THAT COULD NOT OTHERWISE SURVIVE.

I HAVE SPOKEN PUBLICLY ON THIS SUBJECT, AND I AM WRITING DIRECTLY TO PRESIDENT BREZHNEV. SECRETARY VANCE AND I HAVE ALSO SPOKEN FORCEFULLY ABOUT THIS TO PONOMAREV, WHO WILL CONVEY OUR VIEWS TO THE TOP SOVIET LEADERSHIP. IN ADDITION, AS WE DISCUSSED IN PARIS, IT WOULD BE VERY HELPFUL TO US IF OTHER NATIONS COULD IMPRESS UPON THE SOVIET UNION AND CUBA THE DEPTH OF OUR CONCERN, NOT JUST IN THE AREA, BUT ALSO FOR WESTERN EFFORTS TO IMPROVE EAST-WEST RELATIONS IN GENERAL. IF PRESIDENT BREZHNEV RECEIVED SUCH A MESSAGE DIRECTLY FROM YOU, I BELIEVE HE WOULD BETTER UNDERSTAND THE SERIOUSNESS OF OUR CONCERNS, AND PERHAPS THE SOVIETS COULD BE PERSUADED TO HELP CREATE PRECONDITIONS FOR SERIOUS NEGOTIATIONS.

I AM INCREASINGLY INCLINED TO BELIEVE THAT THERE IS LITTLE HOPE FOR SERIOUS NEGOTIATIONS BETWEEN ETHIOPIA AND SOMALIA UNTIL THE SOMALIS MOVE OUT OF THE OGADEN. I HOPE THEY

COULD BE PERSUADED TO DO SO IN RETURN FOR A GUARANTEE OF
THEIR OWN TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY AND SOME DEGREE OF SELF-

DETERMINATION FOR CITIZENS OF THE OGADEN AREA. AS LONG
AS THE ETHIOPIANS SEE THE SOVIETS AND CUBANS AS THE ONLY
DEFENDERS OF THEIR TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY, THEY WILL WANT
TO RETAIN THEM IN LARGE NUMBERS.

AS OUR THINKING DEVELOPES FURTHER, WE WILL BE IN DIRECT
TOUCH WITH YOUR GOVERNMENT. I WOULD VALUE HEARING FROM
YOU ABOUT YOUR OWN THINKING, BUILDING ON WHAT YOU TOLD ME
IN PARIS. WITH WARM REGARDS, SINCERELY, JIMMY CARTER."
END TEXT. VANCE

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NNN

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